

7.

LAKE HURON.

INTERVIEWS AND FIELD NOTES, 1894.

INVESTIGATIONS BY JOINT INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION.

MR. JOHN GILLINGHAM, BAYPORT, MICHIGAN.

INTERVIEWED BY

WM. WAKEHAM AND RICHARD RATHBUN,

AUGUST 30, 1894.

Fishing Loc

q.

Fykes

We fish principally around Stony Island.
We have never fished any gill nets here.
There are a few fyke nets used on the shores
here, but we are not using any. Some use
them with just a wing and others use a heart
They have a regular leader. They run from
the shore just the same as the other nets.

q.

Gill nets were never fished here to
amount to anything that I know of. All
they have been fished around here is in the
bayous for pike.

Seines

There have not been any seines used here
since I have been here. I think the fish
are too scattered for seining.

Hooks

There is no hook and line fishing here to

amount to much. There has been some cat-fish hook and line fishing here. They get them in around the islands generally in shallow water.

*P.
Loc.* James Reeves fishes about 3 miles this side of Caseville and fishes a big rig of pound nets.

Charity Is. The Charity Islands are fished from Bay City. All the fish from there go to Bay City.

Loc. We never did any fishing except right around here.

*P.
no.* I do not know as there are any more pound nets now than there has been for several years. I presume as a whole there are more than in 1885 as there are other parties fishing.

*P.
descrip.* Our pound nets are in quite long strings and everyso far there is a gap left for vessels to pass through. The deepest we

P.

set nets is 35 feet, and they would run off the bank a little. We set them in as shallow water as 9 feet.

Season

We generally get our nets in about September 20 in the fall, and in the spring we set as soon as we can, but it is generally 2 or 3 weeks later than the ice gets out. In the spring our fishing begins to drop off about the first of July. We do not fish any during the summer. We have a couple of small nets in here at the islands, but do not get much in them. We do not make a business of fishing in the summer. Generally from the 4th of July up to the first of September we do not fish, and then after the first of September we would keep on until the ice freezes us out. We calculate to pull out about November 15, sometimes earlier, and sometimes a little later.

descrip.

We have always fished about the same size

P.
descrip

D.V. few

mainly
Muller's
herring

leading

gilling

mesh here, 2 1-2 inch new. We do not use any 3 1-2 inch mesh. Our whitefish fishing does not amount to much of anything. Pickerel and herring are our principal fish. In the leads we use all the way from 4 to 6 inch mesh. The heart and tunnel are fine mesh. I think it makes a difference what size mesh we use in the leads. The main object of using small mesh in the tunnels is to keep fish from gilling. It is easier on the leaders to have a large mesh. I know herring will go through leaders because I have found them gilled from the outside of the pot lots of times, when they were trying to get into the pot from the outside. I presume they were attracted by the fish on the inside of the pot. Herring will gill in the pounds if the mesh is the right size, but I never heard of whitefish gilling. Pickerel will not gill very much. I think

the most of the gilling is either in a blow or when the nets are being lifted. I do not suppose the herring would gill very much if they were not crowded.

bass.

We do not get many black bass here. There are hardly any black bass caught outside. The most of the black bass are caught in the bay here. I think there is quite a little sport fishing around here, but I do not know what the quality of it is.

5 port

W. J. Season abundance

We get a few whitefish in the spring, but *Fig* the most of them are taken in the fall, in October and November principally. Probably would not get a dozen in September. I do not think there are a great many taken anywhere around here at any time. The whitefish are a very small item in our catch, and the lake trout are still fewer yet. I do not suppose there were 20 caught last fall in our nets. They generally run quite fair

Most abundance season size

size, however; very seldom we get one smaller than 2 or 3 lbs. The whitefish generally run pretty fair size also, what we get. I would call 3 lbs. a good sized whitefish here, but they go as high as 6 or 7 lbs., and we do not get many small whitefish here.

Occasionally we see a sauger here, but they are strangers. Now and then I have seen one of these blue pickerel, but only once in a great while. We get a good many yellow perch in the pounds. They will generally run pretty fair size. At times you get a run of small perch, but as a general rule they are a nice size. We get a few catfish in the nets. We get once in a while a sturgeon, but they are very scattering. Sturgeon used to be abundant. I have seen acres of them years ago. We have a fish that we call the silver bass. It is white and has stripes on the side. They

up
size

Sauger

blue pickerel

perch

cat

Sturgeon

W. bass.

are nearly the shape of the sheepshead, but they are very rare. I have not seen any calico bass, but there are quite a few rock bass. There are a few sun fishes, and occasionally we might get one in the pound nets, but not to amount to anything. We get the sheepshead here, and sometimes get quite a lot of them along the last thing. We get a very few in the fall, but when the sheepshead come on abundant they consider the fishing is about over, at the end of the spring run. In the fall there is now and then a sheepshead, perhaps 2 or 3 in a lift. They throw them all away. We get a very few lawyers. The grass pike are a spring fish and we do not get any to amount to anything outside. I do not think we get the maskinonge, but I do not know really what a maskinonge is, unless it is an overgrown pike. There have been 2 fish caught

*Calico bass
rock "
Sunfishes.*

Sheepshead

*ling
cod*

Maskinonge

here since I have been here that I considered were German carp, and that is all. We get quite a few suckers. They are not so very abundant, however. We have quite a few buffalo, or red horse as some call them. There is a little difference in those fish. You will find some with red fins and some are black on the back, but all have large scales. We get the moon-eye here and we call them the shiner. They are a small fish, not weighing over 1-2 lb. Once in a great while we will get a menominee white-fish. We call them the menominee, lake minnow, or pilot fish. We do not regard them of any value because they are so scarce. They come in the fall I think. I do not know the blue fin. We get the regular ^{Herring} class of herring and that is all I know of. We consider there are fully as many herring, or more, than formerly. There is

g. carp

Suckers

buffalo or
red horse

moon-eye

menominee

bluefin

herring

abundant
season

Herring

some reason besides the catching out of the trout for the increase of herring. Last fall for about 2 weeks fishing toward the last they could only lift about 1 or 2 nets and would get all the fish (herring) they could take care of. That was in the last of the fishing in November.

Size

I should think the herring would average about 3 to 1 lb.

M. f. size

They are getting some very nice whitefish off Port Austin, weighing 6 or 7 lbs.

Herring movements

I do not know how the herring travel around here, and I do not think any of the fishermen can tell.

Riparian rights

We claim the frontage only 1 mile from shore, except as a right between man and man (for distances farther out). There has never been any trouble in that respect here. If you go into the lake somewhere and set your nets and are getting good fishing you

would not consider it right for another man to come and set nets right alongside of you.

P.
bottom

What we call hard bottom, if you can drive a stake in a couple of feet by 100 blows of the hammer it is hard bottom. We sometimes drive 4 or 5 feet, but there are not many places where we drive over 6 feet, and it is generally hard bottom all over our grounds.

herring spawning
(w. 1/2 5/11-12)

We do not have many herring spawning about here. They begin spawning about the time we pull out our twine. I think they spawn about the same time as the whitefish. About the last 2 or 3 lifts herring commence to spawn. I have never seen any whitefish spawn in the boats, but have seen herring spawn in the boats the last 2 or 3 lifts, from the 10th to the 20th of November. I do not think the whitefish spawn enough so that the spawn comes from them in the boats.

F. J. J.

I have understood that whitefish used to be abundant, but I have never seen any very large amount here. We came here first in 1861. We did not do any fishing then. We did not fish much before 1878.

I think the herring spawn on the shores here. I do not think the herring come very close inshore, but I suppose they are scattered all over this bay. We get the most of them in the outside pots in the fall. They come into the bay here some because these fellows who fish in along the shore get a few, but not many.

I do not think there are any gill nets set under the ice here for herring.

The wall-eyed pike is about the same value as the herring. We get them in the spring and in the fall also. We get the most of them in the spring.

We salt the most of the herring, but sell

my
abundance
History.

herring
spawning
distribution

inner & outer
ports.

G.
winter
herring

walleye
value
season

Herring
how prepared.

a good many around here fresh, but do not ship them very far.

We get the pickerel more or less all the time, when there is any fishing. The heaviest pickerel fishing is in June. They commence dropping off the last of June and are gone about the first of July. Sometimes we will all pull out by the 4th and sometimes it hangs on a little later. They fish for them around Big Creek just as soon as the ice goes out, and get our best fishing then for about a couple of weeks. From the head of the bay to the east shore I do not think there are many fishing. Benson, I think, has twine on Stony Island. I think he owns the island. I think the fish work out, but where they come from I do not know, but I think they work in from the deep water either from the north or west. The reason I think so is, there were other par-

walleye
season

Loc.

movements

ties fishing outside of our strings, and naturally they would be cutting us off, as they were fishing south of us, but their fishing had no effect upon our fishing.

*Walleye
Spawning*

I hardly ever see any spawn in the pickerel. We do not dress any of them, however. I think the pickerel spawn up in the bay.

Size

We get quite a few small pickerel sometimes, but there is a difference in different times about the size. Sometimes will get a school of large ones and again a school of small ones. Generally the runs are of fish about the same size.

Abundance

The pickerel we sometimes think are more abundant and sometimes think they are dropping off, but as a whole I do not think there are as many as there were 20 years ago, especially in the head of the bay. Years ago they used to get any amount of fish in the Water Works ditch around the head of the

bay, in the winter, and would get 10 or 15 times more than they do now. But our fishing here I do not see as there is much difference in it.

Sturgeon
Trout
decrease

The sturgeon have decreased very much. There are hardly any trout here and years ago there used to be a good many.

Sturgeon

When I first came here we did not make any use of the sturgeon and at that time they were not of any value. I think we realized about 20 cents apiece for sturgeon, counting those that were 4 feet long, and over. That was about 1878. There was a man putting up sturgeon eggs here about that time. I think his name was Close.

Sawmills

There have not been any sawmills here lately, but there used to be big saw mills all along here. There used to be one at Caseville and one right here. I do not know whether they threw any refuse in the

water then or not. I think the refuse had a good deal to do with the Saginaw Valley fishing, up at the mouth of the river, and I suppose the stuff settles all along everywhere. I was reading a Government report a few years ago and they say where there is any of this resinous wood in the water fish will not go near it. They say that pine sawdust or slabs, etc., will drive the fish away. I never saw any of the sawdust in the gills of the fish.

I noticed this year that something was the matter with the pickerel; as the water got warm they did not seem to do well. There seemed to be rotten spots in their gills, and it seemed to attack the large fish more than the others. It did not seem to affect the small fish any. I suppose the fish used to spawn up the bay here. You take it down around Port Crescent where

*walleye
disease*

Spawning

refuse in bay
there are deep channels between the reefs it is just covered with sunken slabs, sawdust and pine bark.

Logs.
Sometimes there is a raft of logs goes through our nets and chafes them all out of shape and knocks the stakes over, but I guess there is no way to prevent that. The bark, however, does not affect our nets.

bark
Sometimes there will be a lot of those logs get loose and they go through the nets, and then you will find bark hanging to the nets and the twine all chafed up. When the logs get into our nets the twine is all ripped out and the stakes are broken off. The bark under the water I do not think will ever decay. I do not think it will be any more decayed 100 years from now than it is now, and sawdust does not decay under water.

Herring principal catch
Herring are what we depend upon and there is a good deal of money invested in the fish

ery.

I think you should make a man who fishes on either side be a citizen. I do not think it is hardly right for a Canadian to come here and fish free and we go over there and pay a license. I do not think it is fair. There are a good many Canadians up Saginaw way, but there are not any here I think. We are here and do not go anywhere else to fish and that is the same as most of the fishermen in the bay, and our interest is to keep up the fishing in the bay.

For pickerel I should say throw out everything less than 1 lb. It is pretty hard to pass a law to regulate this thing just right, because it is so easy to get the small ones in the nets, and when it is blowing or storming it is pretty hard to get them out. They could be thrown out in the spring all right; but in the fall it is al-

*Canadians
fishing on
Am. Side*

*Desire to
preserve
fishing*

*Walleye
thrown out under
1 lb.*

most impossible to get them out. I think the men would get just as many fish, providing it is done all over. Another thing, you place an inspector in a place and he may be more rigid than one in another place.

There is no law but the United States law that is really right, because the laws of the different States will conflict. I do not think there is any need of regulating the mesh, because it is a good deal better to have the fish regulated right. I think the fishermen should be responsible for the size of the fish. If you have a large mesh there are going to be fish gill in it all around. If you get a 3 inch mesh the small fish will get their heads fast in it, and you cannot throw them out, but if you have a small mesh you can throw them out and it will not hurt them. The fishermen can throw pickerel out all right if they have

U. S. make laws

Regulating mesh.

Throw out small walleye

to.

The smallest size whitefish taken should be not less than 1 1-2 lbs.

I do not know the cause of the decrease of whitefish. Fishermen say that increase of the pickerel has destroyed the whitefish, and they say they used to catch lots of whitefish and few pickerel and now they catch the pickerel and hardly any whitefish. We have not caught any whitefish this spring to amount to anything.

If the United States makes laws that they shall not catch pickerel under 1 lb., or destroy them in any way, it will knock out the fishing in the head of the bay and in all the rivers.

I do not think the perch need any protection. If there are a lot of small fish and a lot of big ones, it would be easy enough to throw the small ones but, but

min. size
w.f.

w.f.
decrease
cause

walleye
destroy
w.f.

min. size
walleye

Perch
protection

where the fish run so near the same size, and part a little too small and others just over the limit it is pretty hard to separate them.

herring. whitefish mesh

The herring will all go out where a lb. pickerel will go out. A 1 lb. pickerel might squeeze through a 2 1-2 inch mesh, or will get so far through that you will kill them taking them out. Our herring are not much different shape from the pickerel, as they are pretty fat and round. I have been told that the Lake Erie herring are fatter and wider than our herring, and a lighter color. A good many of our herring are green on the back. There is not one farmer in a hundred that can tell the difference between a herring and a whitefish of the same size.

herring descrip

If they change the mesh, all the netting now in use would be thrown out. The only

Change of mesh would throw out all present nets.

Reg

mesh
how to regulate

way to regulate the size of the mesh is to say what size you shall use and not what size you shall buy. The fishermen would have to make allowances for shrinkage and would have to experiment until they found out how much it would shrink.

shrinkage

close season
for w.f.

A whitefish close season would not hurt the fishermen here any, as the whitefish do not amount to much.

close season
sturgeon

I would not care if they had a close season on sturgeon also, as we do not get enough to amount to anything.

sturgeon

